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HUMAN RELATIONS IN RETAILING, A SUGGESTED ADULT DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION COURSE OUTLINE.

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THIS IS A GUIDE FOR THE POTENTIAL RETAIL SUPERVISOR, OR ACTUAL SUPERVISOR, WHICH SUGGESTS SOUND APPROACHES TO BUILDING GOOD INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE SUPERVISOR AND HIS STAFF, AND BETWEEN THE RETAIL STORE AND THE CUSTOMERS. THE COURSE IS PLANNED FOR FIVE 2-HOUR SESSIONS ON (1) A PROFILE OF THE RETAIL SUPERVISOR, (2) ON-THE-JOB BEHAVIOR OF THE RETAIL STAFF, (3) SATISFIED CUSTOMERS, (4) HUMAN RELATIONS PROBLEMS IN RETAILING, AND (5) ACTUAL PROBLEMS BROUGHT IN BY THE STUDENTS FOR DISCUSSION. IT MAY BE TAUGHT BY A PERSONNEL MANAGER, A DIVISION OR UNIT MANAGER, OR A PERSON TEACHING DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION COURSES IN HIGH SCHOOL OR COLLEGE. THE COURSE SHOULD BE CONDUCTED BY ONE PERSON, USING GROUP DISCUSSION WHENEVER POSSIBLE. A BIBLIOGRAPHY AND APPENDIXES INCLUDING TIPS FOR INSTRUCTORS AND POINTERS FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS ARE INCLUDED. (SM)

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A Suggested Adult Distributive Education
Course Outline

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FOREWORD

When did you start learning to get along with people? How did you go about it? "When" is probably easier to answer--the first time you couldn't get your own way. But as you know, "how" is not easy. Pounding a table and turning the other cheek are two "how's." There are problems though. Sometimes force results in counterforce so that the table is turned. (What customer would stand for table pounding?) And being too permissive with employees can result in employee apathy. Human Relations in Retailing is a guide for the potential retail supervisor or actual supervisor which suggests sound approaches to building good interrelationships between the supervisor and his staff, and between the retail store and the customer.

The course outline was developed initially by the Bureau of Business and Distributive Education. Adult distributive education programs in the North Atlantic States provided a basis for the 1966 revision, augmented by suggestions from Fred Alexander, distributive education teacher-coordinator at Plainview High School, Plainview, New York. E. John Gradoni and Hunting Sherrill of the Bureau of Business and Distributive Education were responsible for overseeing the revision.

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INTRODUCTION

Employment in the distributive occupations is increasing at a faster rate than that of the total labor force. Many of the available jobs are more complex and require better trained people. In a people-oriented type of business, mastery of effective human relations techniques is especially important.

This suggested outline for a course in Human Relations in Retailing is designed to acquaint the retail supervisor with the fundamental principles of human relations as they relate to this specialized area. The emphasis is on the role of the supervisor, supervisor-employee relationships, customer relationships, and human relations problem solving.

This course is planned for a minimum of five two-hour sessions which should include a session devoted to actual problems that students can bring to class for discussion in the light of what they've learned. The course may be taught by a personnel manager, a division or unit manager, or a person teaching distributive education courses in high school or college. Because of the interrelationship of the various topics in the course, it is suggested that one individual should teach the complete course. Group discussion is always desirable whenever it can be worked into the course.

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Session I

THE RETAIL SUPERVISOR: A PROFILE

I. The Responsibilities of a Retail Supervisor

A. The supervisor has only limited control over his staff unless he wins their allegiance by the strength of his personality and character.

1. Stock purchase plans, profit sharing plans, or suggestion systems are weak substitutes for good relations that grow out of mutual respect.

2. The supervisor must win over his staff--a primary obligation.

B. The successful supervisor has a flexible approach to each employee.

1. The old chestnut, "No two people are alike," is still around because it's true. The retail supervisor must understand the human nature of each employee.

2. No matter what a supervisor knows about an employee, he ought to forget it. Giving the employee another chance is absolutely essential. This must be clear to everyone. No one should feel that he is licked before he starts.

3. Much of the supervisor's job will be to delegate work. This is difficult. He must know how to set it up so that each employee functions according to his ability. For example, he has to be alert to the employee who must have everything spelled out as well as the employee who can work out details for himself.

II. The Supervisor Must Play Several Roles.

A. In his primary role, the supervisor is a leader.

B. But he must also put himself in the shoes of the person he is talking with in order to understand that person's point of view.

C. He has to be his own audience. The supervisor must see himself as his whole staff sees him.

1. The supervisor makes two impressions--particular and general. The two impressions ought to be consistent. He shouldn't be a tyrant in public and a "good guy" in private. That kind of thing does not add a dimension to his personality. It is a tedious affectation.

D. The supervisor's personal qualities make him unique.

1. He must have a wide experience which gives him a working knowledge of the innumerable details of the retail trade.

2. His personality must be free from idiosyncracy. It must adapt to many types of people.

3. Since the supervisor must understand human nature, this means that he must know about motivations. What makes people do the things they do? Fear? Jealousy? Inadequacy? Generosity? These feelings and many more are responsible for behavior. The supervisor who operates on the level that everyone is motivated by money alone will be operating far below the requirements of his job.

III. The Supervisor-Employee Relationship

A. There has to be feedback. This is another way of saying that a supervisor ought to know what effect he is having. He must convince his staff that they have an actual voice. He can't kid them into thinking they have a voice because they will see through any sham devices.

B. The supervisor must know the employee's job because the employee's confidence in him will depend on what the supervisor knows about that job.

C. There can be no coercion or threats. Although coercion can be disguised, it is just as ineffective a supervisory tool over the long haul as being too easy is.

1. The hard approach, close supervision and tight controls over behavior, are ineffective because of employee counterforces--overt antagonism or subtle sabotage of management objectives.

2. The soft approach, if not used wisely, can have devastating results. Being too permissive and satisfying all staff demands are risky solutions to human relations problems.

D. Like any organization, the retail store is a system under control. A fairly constant supply of human energy is being pumped into it. And there is a fairly constant output. This is the natural state of any organization. It is important, therefore, to have a natural control--one that contemplates human needs:

1. The employee must feel physically comfortable.
2. He must not have fears about keeping his job.
3. He must feel as though he's worth something.
4. He has to feel he's getting out of the job what he puts in.
5. He has to feel that he is going someplace.

E. At one time or another, the supervisor will have to discipline an employee. The punishment must match the offense. All rules should apply equally to all employees.

IV. Communication Between the Supervisor and His Staff

A. The supervisor must set up clear lines of communication between him and his employees.

1. The employee should not be forced to make a stock response. This will frustrate him and damage the dynamic quality of the organization. He cannot have the feeling that if the supervisor wants his opinion, he will ask for it.

2. The supervisor must listen to the employee. By recognizing that the major barrier to hearing somebody out is the natural tendency to approve or disapprove of what he's saying, the supervisor can learn to listen without judging until the problem has been aired.

B. How should the supervisor give orders?

1. Suppose that the employees have to be told about a general policy in the store. The word choice in a memorandum will strike a chord in the employee just as much as the content does. It's important, therefore, to think about how a communication sounds as well as what it says.

2. Any rule or order that is authoritarian will break under the strain. The supervisor shou'd not suppose that what he does or says cannot be picked apart. Nothing is watertight and thus the supervisor should be especially careful about making pronouncements that cry out for somebody to point out a contradiction.

V. SUMMARY

A. Treat People as Individuals.

B. Make Best Use of Each Worker's Abilities.

C. Provide Job Satisfaction.

D. Plan and Work Together.

Session II

THE RETAIL STAFF: ON-THE-JOB BEHAVIOR

I. Needs as Motivation for On-the-Job Behavior

Case: Charlotte likes her new job in the lingerie department. She likes the people she's working with and, since so many people had applied, thinks she was lucky to get the job. Two weeks later she complains about pay.

A. It's a rare employee who does not think up a new need once the previous one has been satisfied. Charlotte needed a job. She got one. Then she needed more money. There will be other needs.

B. The supervisor has a duty to try to satisfy needs within the context of the employee's job, but he should also be aware of the fact that a satisfied need does not guarantee motivation for on-the-job behavior. Once a need is satisfied, it is simply replaced by a new one.

C. Employee needs that will have to be satisfied are:

1. Need for personal worth
2. Need for job satisfaction
3. Need for respect
4. Need to belong

D. Satisfied needs can't be counted on to achieve consistent on-the-job behavior.

II. Motivating the New Employee and the Old One

A. What are ideal on-the-job traits in the retail business?

1. Thoroughness
2. Initiative
3. Tact
4. Enthusiasm
5. Emotional Control

B. Instructing an employee about ideal behavior is not a haphazard, half-hearted, ho-humming session where the employee learns the line and is told to smile.

C. Successful training for on-the-job behavior means that the employee has converted what he has learned during training into on-the-job behavior. There must be training for job requirements.

D. The supervisor can make effective use of rewards and punishments as a motivation to learn during the training period because the trainee naturally wants to perform well--his social need to look good in the eyes of his supervisor and co-employees.

E. What happens if the training program is not carried over to the job?

1. The employee will become confused and follow the path of least resistance.

Case: After her supervisor teaches the "right way" to sell, Charlotte learns from Marie that nobody follows the supervisor's advice because he teaches a canned sell which he never uses himself. If Charlotte uses the canned sell, her fellow employees will think she's silly. Instead of following the lead of the supervisor, Charlotte will probably follow the lead of her co-employees because of the pressure they exert.

F. A job training program has to resemble the job.

1. If the training program is successful because of rewards and punishments, then the same supervisor-employee relationship ought to be carried over to the job.

G. How can learning during training be carried over to the job so that behavior on the job reflects the training?

1. No employee will follow a supervisor's advice unless the supervisor acts the same way as he talks.

2. The supervisor who tries to second-guess what his boss wants instead of what should be, jeopardizes the success of the entire retail operation.

3. Management must decide on a human relations concept and show both old and new employees how to use the concept by practicing it in the business.

H. The supervisor must anticipate all negative influences on the job after employee training has been completed and prepare the new employee for these influences.

III. Good Working Relationships

A. To get along together, employees can't feel threatened by one another.

1. The supervisor should not point to one employee in order to show a second how the job should be done.

2. Most people are quick to sense hostility. Some clashes between employees are inevitable. But the supervisor has a duty to take steps if there are frequent clashes between co-employees.

B. The retail supervisor should encourage his staff to talk about their work to one another--often and in great detail. Communication is just as essential between co-employees as between supervisor and employees.

1. The grapevine is of course the standard direct line in any organization and it is probably the most effective informal communication. How much talk goes on about how to sell better is debatable.

C. High morale will disappear if rules are violated and the offending employee is not punished.

1. Most co-workers are naturally jealous of one another's positions relating to sales, seniority, and influence. They want to be equal and they expect equal treatment. Obviously, this is not always possible because some employees are more effective than others. The supervisor can offset this jealousy by not showing any favoritism.

D. The "gumshoe" supervisor will not have the cooperation of his staff.

1. "Checking up" too often will cause employees to throw up a solid wall of resentment.

2. Most employees have to feel they have some control over their work.

IV. Summary

A. Pinpoint Factors Which Influence On-the-Job Behavior.

B. Prepare New Employee for His Actual Job.

C. Apply Company Rules Equally.

D. Encourage Communication Between Employees.

E. Assume That Each Employee Wants To Work.

Session III

SATISFIED CUSTOMERS: THE RESULT OF GOOD HUMAN RELATIONS

I. Understanding the Customer

A. The right kind of on-the-job behavior in the retail store encourages customers to buy more and to return often.

1. The supervisor is responsible for the on-the-job behavior of his staff.

2. Teaching his staff about the <u>different types of customers</u> includes teaching how to be helpful to customers who are:

a. Just looking
b. Disagreeable
c. Inattentive
d. Silent
e. Talkative
f. Indecisive
g. Positive
h. Hurried
i. Deliberate
j. Confused

B. A person can be understood only when <u>connections</u> are made between the bits and pieces of his makeup.

1. The <u>customer gives clues about himself</u>. It's up to the salesperson to connect the clues to find the right approach. For example, consider:

a. Walk
b. Facial expression
c. Clothing
d. Conversation

Case: Charlotte notices a woman in her early 20's ambling along and carrying packages from a competitor's store. She stops to look at a dress and says, "Just looking." She has a cheerful face. Charlotte notices that the young woman's clothes are out of style. Should Charlotte begin talking to the woman by tactfully referring to the old style?

C. Unless it is complimentary, do not question a <u>customer's taste or judgment</u>.

1. The out-of-date clothing was a clue to the kind of person the young woman was--indifferent to change. But certainly any mention of it to her would have been bad human relations.

2. The young woman may have been indifferent to change, but she had a cheerful face and would have undoubtedly responded to any kind of courtesy. What other clues were there?

D. Customers are combinations of types.

1. People can't be put in certain classes and dealt with according to a formula.

E. The retail salesperson must adjust his personality to the customer.

1. The customer has no obligation to adjust his personality to the salesclerk's.

a. Customers generally are very conscious of their roles. They have the money and they want to be pleasantly treated when they spend it.

2. There are always disagreeable customers. Like everyone else they too are combinations. The retail salesperson should be aware of possible reasons for the disagreeable customer's behavior.

a. Using the retail clerk as an emotional scapegoat

b. Being indecisive at heart and therefore afraid he will be pushed into a purchase

c. Blaming the salesperson for high costs

II. What the Customer Wants

A. Just as the salesperson wants to feel important so does the customer.

1. The customer responds to the same kind of treatment the salesperson expects from his supervisor and co-workers.

2. There is no magic in retail selling. Keep the customer's interests above your own.

B. Knowing what kind of person the customer is will be of no value unless you can make the customer want to buy from you.

1. As long as the retail clerk is inoffensive, he can make a sale by just standing there while the customer tells him what he wants. This is passive selling and the clerk gets by but the customer does not leave the store with a positive impression. It is neutral like the clerk.

C. The key to making a customer return is in the retail salesclerk's ability to convince the customer that he likes his job.

1. A customer can sense very quickly whether a salesperson is merely putting in time or genuinely interested in doing a first-rate job.

2. Ask the class to think about how they react when somebody complains about his job. Invariably, the listener thinks there is something wrong with the speaker, not the job, even though the job may be undesirable. A customer can justifiably conclude that a salesperson's bad attitude is a complaint about his job.

3. Two ways to convince a customer about job interest are:

   a. Having a thorough knowledge
   b. Being willing to explain

III. Summary

A. Treat the Customer as Though He Is You.

B. Know the Different Types of Customers.

C. Do Not Try To Catalog People. Take the Time To Discover Them.

D. Put the Interests of the Customer Above Your Own.

Session IV

HUMAN RELATIONS PROBLEMS IN RETAILING: A FOUR-STEP SOLUTION

I. Listening With a Third Ear

A. The four-step method of handling store problems emphasizes the need for a "third ear"--one that will take in the problem without judging. The first step is to get all the facts.

B. The second step is to weigh and decide. Consideration should be given to the following:

1. Facts in conflict require evidence.

2. Any action to be taken should be looked at in its total effect on the individual, group, and company.

3. The supervisor must then decide the proper person to take action.

C. The third step is to take action.

D. Once the action has been taken, the supervisor takes the fourth step which is to check on the effect of the action.

II. Summary

A. Show the Connection Between the Responsibilities of a Supervisor And the Four-Step Method of Problem Solving.

B. Indicate the Kinds of Problems That Come up Between Co-workers.

C. Point Out the Possibility of Disputes Between Customers as Well as Between Customer and Employee.

D. Show That the Wisest Approach to Any Problem Is To Listen Until All Parties Have Stopped Talking.

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Harvard Business School, Division of Research, Soldier's Field, Boston 63, Massachusetts.
Training for human relations by F.J. Roethlisberger.

National Foremen's Institute, Division of Vision, Inc., New London, Connecticut.
The human side.

New Jersey State Department of Education, 175 West State Street, Trenton 25, New Jersey
Human relations problems--for executive training.

Small Business Administration, Washington 25, D.C.
Managing for better morale: SBA No. 37.

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan.
Human relations in retailing--instructor's manual.

Wisconsin State Board of Vocational and Adult Education, 14 North Carroll Street, Madison 3, Wisconsin.
Psychology of human relations.

A P P E N D I X

TIPS FOR INSTRUCTORS

A. Preparation

1. The room

   a. Arrange chairs so students can face one another.
   b. Check visual aids and physical properties such as heat, light, ventilation, ashtrays, comfortable chairs, and freedom from noise.

2. Teaching aids--chalkboard, charts, illustrations, diagrams, posters, cartoons, books, manuals, pamphlets, instruction sheets, samples, cutaways, motion pictures, filmstrips and slides, models, exhibits, and field trips

3. Teaching methods

   a. Discussion--to warm up or review, to promote understanding, to give reasons, to emphasize factual material, to make people think, to get opinions
   b. Conference--to modify opinions, to develop understanding, to get acceptance
   c. Demonstration, dramatization, and field trips--to show manipulative operations, to clarify principles or theory, to show use of equipment, to orient and explain
   d. Practice and drill--to develop performance skill, to help in retaining information, knowledge, and understanding
   e. Lecture--to present information or explain a process

B. Presentation

1. Be positive--direct attention quickly to the subject at hand.

2. Direct the thinking of the group--focus attention on specifics; keep order.

3. Speak correctly--use a pleasant voice, control pitch and volume; speak slowly and distinctly; enunciate clearly; use proper words.

4. Be well groomed and conservatively dressed.

5. Avoid distracting mannerisms.

6. Start on time; be businesslike; stop on time.

7. You should:

   a. Smile--it's standard equipment.
   b. Be enthusiastic--it's contagious.
   c. Sell--never tell.
   d. Change voice, pace, and tone.
   e. Encourage participation.
   f. Dramatize.
   g. Follow your plan.

C. Handling visual aids

1. Flow charts

a. Face the students, not the chart.
b. Be sure everyone can see the flow chart.
c. Use a pointer.
d. First go through the points on the chart quickly.

2. Chalkboard

a. Write legibly, but quickly.
b. Stand beside, not in front of, your writing.
c. Talk while writing.
d. Use the chalkboard as you would a chart presentation. (See C, 1, Flow Charts, above.)

3. Films (moving picture and slide)

a. Preview the film.

b. Plan introductory remarks.

(1) <u>What</u> the film will show
(2) <u>Why</u> it is being shown
(3) <u>What</u> the students are expected to get out of it

c. Prepare the room and equipment.

d. Prepare students to see the film.

e. Project the film. (Don't leave the room.)

f. Summarize the main points.

D. Using the proper teaching method

1. Adapt discussion, conference, demonstration, practice and drill, and lecture (see A, 3, a-e) to content for most effective presentation.
2. Do not embarrass an adult with a question he can't answer.

E. Closing the session

1. Summarize the key points.
2. Encourage the students.
3. Promote attendance at next session.
4. Do not assign homework.

POINTERS FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

A. Prepare the lesson.

1. Determine what is to be presented.
2. Organize your lesson; outline it.
3. Decide the best method of presentation.
4. Plan suitable visual aids--charts, graphs, slides, films, and pamphlets.
5. Reduce your plans to writing:

Title
A.---------
1.-------
2.-------
B.---------
1.-------

B. Prepare yourself.

1. Rehearse your presentation.
2. Time your presentation. Reserve about half your time for discussion and questions.
3. Attempt to anticipate questions that may be asked.

C. Prepare the room.

1. Check list of materials and aids you plan to use.
2. Check operation of any required equipment.
3. Check room facilities--chalkboard, chalk, erasers, lights.

D. Prepare your class.

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Make a few introductory remarks.

E. Miscellaneous

1. Emphasize and summarize important points.
2. Announce each topic you present; summarize afterwards.
3. When talking, face the class, not the chalkboard.
4. Insist that students identify themselves when asking questions.
5. Ask that elaborate questions be rephrased into shorter ones.
6. Do not permit questions until the end of lecture period.
7. Permit only one question or problem at a time. Carry each problem through to a conclusion before the next question.

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